

## FREE TIME –THE MAJOR FACTOR OF INFLUENCE FOR LEISURE

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### Abstract

*Nowadays, leisure services determine an increasing new way of tourism development. Tourism operators include more and more a large selection of leisure opportunities that reflect the principal way to delimit and differentiate their offers and furthermore to establish a stronger position in tourism market. The variety of leisure activities influences the creation of numerous possibilities of entertainment and in consequence knowing the meaningful factors of leisure's influence would determine the premises for it. As a result this paper tries to analyze the influencing factors of leisure participation. The time factor, or more important the free time represents a major component of leisure services, as these services take place in people's free time, and the dimension and evolution of free time has a dramatic impact on leisure development.*

**Keywords:** leisure, free time, behavior, trends

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### 1. Introduction

Choosing a leisure activity is based on a series of interconnected reasons influenced by a few factors like [Torkilsen, 2005]: *the individual factor*: the personality, the abilities, the capacities, the stage in one's life, the interests, etc; *the circumstances and situation that individuals find themselves in*: the social class, the job, the revenue, the work-leisure time availability, etc; *the opportunities and support service available to the individual*: facilities, resources, programs and its management, etc.

### 2. The major influencing factors for leisure

As presented before the main domain of interest can be underlined as personal and family influences, social and situational circumstances and opportunities.

Specialists have concluded and presented the principle characteristic of each of

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those three categories as follows in the table below.

From *the first category*, the personal factor determines greatly the way the leisure activities are perceived, understood and used. The personality, attitude, abilities form an individual behavior with needs and desires for involving in the leisure activities and services. But all behavior is strongly based on age, gender and education and culture.

The implication in leisure activities is more intense for children in their constant play and reduced for adults. Also is important the age and the moment in a life time cycle, for instance: a single person has more free time for leisure activities than a married one with children. Then the availability of free time also determines differences in leisure based on leisure criteria.

The argument of a family with children can influence the implication degree of gender in leisure, as a woman takes care of children and therefore has little time for leisure activities. In a large spectrum it appears that the participation rates do not differ substantially for men and women, though women tend to take part more in cultural activities and men tend to take part in more active activities such as sports.

The level of education, its characteristics the length of it also influence the engagement in a particularly leisure activity such as arts, hobbies, etc. that require special knowledge skills.

Table 1. The influencing factors of leisure

**Personal Social and circumstantial Opportunity factors**

Age Occupation Resources availability  
 Stage in life cycle Income Facilities  
 Gender Disposable income Awareness  
 Marital status Material wealth and goods Perception of opportunity  
 Dependents and ages Car ownership and mobility Recreation service  
 Will and purpose of life Time availability Distribution of facilities  
 Personal obligation Duties and obligations Access and location  
 Resourcefulness Home and social environment Choice of activity  
 Leisure perception Friends and peer groups Transport  
 Attitudes and motivation Social role and contacts Costs  
 Interest and preoccupation Environment factors Management  
 Skills and ability Mass leisure factors Marketing  
 Personality and confidence Education and attainment Programming  
 Culture born into Population factors Organization  
 Upbringing and background Social accessibility  
 Political policies

Source: Gershuny J., 2000, *Changing times: work and leisure in a postindustrial society*, Oxford University Press;

From *the second category* the income is a major factor for election a type of leisure activity and it is not surprising that since income correlates with social class and education level, a higher income group has a greater participation in leisure activities.

The social class regards to people that have kindly the same type of occupation with similar type of income determining a specific characteristic of influencing factors for leisure behavior. Of course, the higher position in a social participates in a higher degree than lower position members. The attitudes and values of people in social settings are seen as enabling or inhibiting factors regarding the leisure behavior.

From *the third category* involving opportunity, the perception of leisure provision such as the facilities and equipments, may influence the participation more then the other form of provision. The access and location of leisure facilities represents an important aspect of leisure choice. The marketing programs brought out in order to promote several leisure activities, the management of those activities may also influence more and more the leisure industry overall.

Each of the characteristic presented has an importance, varying from less to high importance, but one of them plays a special part in leisure participation: the leisure time.

### **3. The role of free time in the leisure industry**

The free time or leisure time is presented to be the amount of time that is not occupied with mandatory tasks, all the activities that can take place after the closure of work time ones. This conception of free time is generally found in the industrialized societies that function after the dominator part of day-the work hours. Hence, eliminating the work time we encounter the general free time

Unfortunately the notion of free time has yet difficulties in describing its full essence. For instance, activities like taking care of children, gardening, cleaning the house, etc. that take place after work time, or regardless of the work represents or not the free time.

Is there then, free time as in time used for doing nothing?

The specialists come up with a proper classification of time in general, like [Leitner, 2005]:

*Work-* obligated time involving constrains and commitments;

*Personal care-* underlines the time used for maintenance, and self care;

*Leisure jobs* – regards the activities that are freely chosen, but are important only by their result, such as gardening as a free activity, but the interest being the profit made by exhibiting or selling the products obtained;

*Pure work* – is the opposite of the latest one, meaning that the activities are obligated like work , but the result are intrinsic rather that extrinsic as before, for example a professional player determined to play by the legal contract, but play only for his enjoyment;

*Work job* – regards the activities obligated to do, the constraints but motivated by both extrinsic and intrinsic criteria;

*Pure job* activities refer to the activities constrained to realize and with the only purpose of the extrinsic results. At first glance, these types of time activities may present a genuine prospective over leisure time. But in regards to them, some activities are interchangeable and therefore the results are scrambled.

Other theories imply that time can be divided in four categories like [Jenkins, Pigram, 2003]: *the time for work*, *the time for leisure*, or free time, *the time for unpaid work*, and *the time for personal care*.

Other specialists indicate different perspective on the free time concepts as [Stanculescu, 2006]:

1. *leisure time represents a behavior pattern rather than a specific category* and have a series of downsides like: takes into consideration the individual behavior in the detriment of collective one; offers the possibility to interchange the terms of play and time in the leisure component; leaves room for a subjective approach by unifying the proper meaning of free time activities, and so on.;
2. *leisure time is considered only in relation with the working time*, with better results, but simplifying in a negative way the other types of time and their relations;
3. *leisure time is regarded in connection with the work time and the personal time*, which includes an improvement to the general theory of free time;
4. *leisure time is presented separately as time and as its specific activities*.

The definition of leisure or leisure time to be more specific has great difficulties, the leisure term has been also associated with time, entertainment, recreation, and therefore a clear classification can reflect an error. More than that, the delimitation of free time from other types of time can be subjective and perceived differently from one individual to another.

Even though the leisure time has a problematic approach the essence of it has greater meaning for the general development of society, representing a barometer of technical civilization, progress, determined by the social and economic development of countries defining also the quality of life. The length of leisure time is strictly an indicator of a developed society where the work time has decreased and the increase of its productivity and progress.

More than that, the leisure time represents one of the main factors that influences the travel and tourism industry. As progress has developed in the general societies, the tendency for free time is to increase itself in the detriment of work hours. Even though the amount of actual leisure time is not expected to significantly increase in most developed countries over a short period of time, there are present some changes in more flexible working patterns, in the restructuring of work-free time relationship.

The change of free time in the general context of time has a positive perspective, but we must not ignore a series of factors that can influence by decreasing or stabilizing

the free time. The most important factor is represented by the so called “limitless materialism” meaning that people desire more material goods and therefore they tend to work more to achieve that. Other factor like service development, the change of family role can of course diminish the expansion of free time.

The change of time use can be seen in the table below concerning the history of society types:

Table 2. A developmental typology of time use

<p><b>Pre-modern societies</b>  <i>Time</i> – for the majority long hours of substance work  <i>Status</i>- small elite “leisure class” remainder undifferentiated by time use  <i>Gender</i> – strong differentiation by task</p> <p><b>Industrialized societies</b>  <i>Time</i> – long hours of work for subordinate hours  <i>Status</i> – single cleavage, multiple derogation for subordinate classes  <i>Gender</i> – strong differentiation by task</p> <p><b>Modern industrial (post industrial) societies</b>  <i>Time</i> – declining work, providing opportunities for increasing consumption  <i>Status</i> – converging work-time patterns, multiple cross-cutting cleavages in leisure  <i>Gender</i> – gradually diminishing differentiation</p>
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Source: Roberts K., 2006, *Leisure and the contemporary society*, Cabi Publishing;

Over the years statistics have shown that leisure time has increased, but it is important to understand the leisure time development in comparison with work time, personal time, transport, and so on. The structure of time budget over two decades is presented as follows:

Table 3. The structure of time budget in the years 1800 and 2000

1800	2000
Free time =3 years (8%)	Free time =19 years (27%)
Work = 11 years (30%)	Work = 8 years (11%)
Transport = 2 years (6%)	Transport =6 years (6%)
School and childhood = 5 years (14%)	School and childhood = 8 years (11%)
Personal time = 15 years (42%)	Personal time = 31 years (42%)
<b>Total = 36 years</b>	<b>Total = 72 years</b>

Source: Ioncica M., 2004, *Economia Serviciilor*, Third edition, Uranus Publishing, Bucharest;

During two centuries, the free time has grown from 3 years to 19 year, in the condition of almost doubling the expectancy of life. This increase is based on the decrease of work time as a result of the growing of labor productivity in the primary and secondary sector of activity.

Also the progress has been introduced inclusively in the third sector. It can also be noted the similar percent of personal time in the total calculation, but also the fact that the personal time has grown.

The increases in space mobility and distances, the educational need to develop have determined larger numbers in transport and education in school.

**In conclusion**, the free time has a significant importance in determining the leisure behavior, the leisure involvement and the leisure future prospective. Even though work-leisure time relationship is still ambiguous defined or their limits are blurry, the intent to define free time as a particular component has captured the attention of specialists. The role of major element in leisure definition free time will increase its meaning over the years.

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